

ISAC FAST FACTS

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION, DATA, OR AN EXPERT SOURCE? HERE ARE JUST SOME OF THE TOPICS ISAC CAN COVER:



THE MONETARY AWARD PROGRAM
including budget, award information, application demographics, institution statistics, and process



STATISTICS
program information and appropriation history on all ISAC administered grant and scholarship programs



COLLEGE TUITION
rates for Illinois universities and colleges



COLLEGE ACCESS
particularly for first generation and low income students



COLLEGE & CAREER
exploration and planning



MANAGING
college costs



FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION
completion efforts in Illinois



APPLYING
for financial aid



MINIMIZING
student loan debt



STUDENT LOAN
repayment options

CALL US FOR DATA, TIPS AND INSIGHT IF YOU ARE COVERING:

College Changes Everything® Month and Fall campaign

October (CCE Month) /Labor Day through Thanksgiving (CCE Campaign)

Rock the FAFSA Campaign

February-April

Money Smart Week

April

National College Decision Day

May 1

ABOUT ISAC

The Illinois Student Assistance Commission is a state agency with a mission to provide Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable. Unaffiliated with any school or sector, ISAC provides objective and comprehensive information to help students and families make informed choices about postsecondary education. Then, through the Monetary Award Program and other scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. Since 1957, ISAC has assisted Illinois families by providing nearly 5.7 million awards, totaling almost \$11.9 billion in grants, scholarships and non-loan aid.

In the 14 years since ISAC launched its ISACorps outreach program, the ISACorps have held more than 45,000 college and financial aid outreach events, interacted with more than 1.3 million students and parents, and provided one-on-one assistance to more than 67,000 students.

MORE ABOUT ISAC

GOVERNANCE

A ten-member Commission, appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Illinois Senate, provides oversight for the agency.

Commissioners serve staggered six-year terms without pay, typically meeting four times annually to review and approve agency activities as well as provide important perspective, insight and direction for the agency. The Commission hires the Executive Director, who is responsible for leading the agency's execution of its mission to provide Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable.

STAFF

Led by Executive Director Eric Zarnikow, the agency employs approximately 250 staff all over the state (including ISACorps members and temporary employees), who administer a variety of state grant and scholarship programs; offer guidance and support for students and parents through ISAC's Call Center, Student Services, and College Access and Outreach divisions; provide research and data on state higher education programs and higher education issues; help train financial aid administrators and school counselors; support schools in the development and adoption of a Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework; and provide information and assistance related to student loan repayment and forgiveness programs.

A team of recent college graduates working throughout the state make up the ISACorps, who serve as near-peer mentors and assist students and families with the college planning and financial aid processes. The ISACorps also help staff the Illinois GEAR UP Program in 19 middle schools and high schools across the state pursuant to a seven-year federal grant administered by ISAC. The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant is a federal discretionary grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

As a result of budgetary constraints and subsequent reductions in force, ISAC's regular staff has been reduced by more than 60% since FY 2007. The ISACorps were added in FY 2009, paid entirely through a federal College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) until FY 2014. From FY 2015-2022, the ISACorps was funded through a combination of federal loan proceeds and increasing state support. In FY 2023, those federal loan proceeds have been eliminated, and funding for the ISACorps and all agency operations will rely entirely on state support.

PRIMARY AGENCY FUNCTIONS

Administration of the Monetary Award Program (MAP), the state's largest need-based grant program, and other state and federal grant and scholarship programs for college

College access and outreach programs and services, including one-on-one assistance, tailored to first generation college students but available to all

Call Centers and a free text messaging service respond to questions about college and financial aid, student loans and repayment

Professional Development for counselors, teachers, and financial aid advisors; free webinars on student loans and repayment programs (e.g. PSLF) for students and families, education professionals, and the general public

Capacity development to empower communities to better support students' postsecondary and career exploration

Research on college access and affordability

College Illinois! 529 prepaid tuition program (enrollment closed since 2017)

State and federal program compliance evaluations for colleges and universities